Ready Soon for Briefs

House Labor Group Sets Hearings Date

The legislative assembly's standing committee on labor is expected to start hearing briefs from interested groups by Wednesday.

W. H. Murray (SC-Prince Rupert) was yesterday elected chairman of the labor committee, which will hold an organizational meeting today, to decide what groups and individuals should be invited to appear before it.

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MLA Seeks Rights Bill Conference

A federal-provincial conference to prepare an outline of necessary changes in provincial legislation which would affect a national bill of rights, is being sought by Oak Bay Liberal MLA Archie Gibbs.

Mr. Gibbs said the bill of rights legislation now being considered in Ottawa could interfere with provincial rights, especially in the field of labor.

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Advisory Board Hinted by Wicks

By ALEC MERRIMAN

Labor Minister Lyle Wicks delivered a 90-minute speech in the legislature yesterday, but what he didn't say was more important than what he did say.

LYLE WICKS
. . . whisper or shout?

He talked about Gen. Charles de Gaulle, NATO, municipal affairs, the Mission tree farm, centennial safety awards, the Second Narrows bridge collapse, Indians and labor relations.

But he said nothing about new labor legislation and nothing about giving full liquor rights to Indians, two things that had been expected from the labor minister. He advanced no plan for relieving unemployment.

Only thing that could be construed as even a hint of new labor legislation was an interest he expressed in establishment of a labor advisory council, similar to one in Australia.

But, he said, establishment of a labor advisory council in British Columbia depends on finding men of such high calibre and so dedicated they are prepared to put their country or their state first.

Mr. Wicks said he believed there are such men and women. "I believe they are among us in large numbers, but will they make known in a strong clear voice their deepest convictions?"

His support for a labor advisory council appeared to be more "the flying of a kite" to get opinion from labor and management than a serious indication of impending labor legislation.

"Will the reply be a whisper or a shout?" he asked.

Mr. Wicks admitted his department looks upon existing labor problems with anxiety "and we have been called upon by many for action," but he threw the ball back to labor and management.

Re-examine Position, Attitudes

"Perhaps labor and management should take a very careful look at their method of operation and, even more pertinent, perhaps re-examine their own position and attitudes," he said.

He said many briefs had been presented with many employers and individuals recommending compulsory arbitration and labor saying it is unalterably opposed to compulsory arbitration.

He said the case was different in Britain where trade unionists protested a government plan to end compulsory arbitration in the form of industrial dispute courts.

"British Columbia is in the peculiar position of being out of step. Here we have free enterprisers advocating compulsory measures and labor supporting an opposite position to its brothers across the sea."

He said the Australian government's labor advisory council "seems to me to carry considerable merit."

He explained it consists of three nominees of labor and three from the business world under chairmanship of the minister of labor. It meets quarterly and studies matters of public interest and concern in the field of labor-management relations such as unemployment, employment trends, economic conditions, productivity, automation and labor relations.

Mr. Wicks said experience in province of advisory boards "unfortunately has not always been a happy one. Some boards have been used as political sounding boards and therefore have not fulfilled the purpose for which they were set up."

Federal Policies Lashed

Mr. Wicks lashed out hard at federal fiscal policies and praised the provincial government's debt reduction policies.

He said 1960 will see the end of B.C.'s net debt which will free $20,000,000 a year formerly used to pay interest charges. He said that money will then be used for work-creating projects, to augment social services and other desirable benefits.

He said the total interest bill of the federal government this year will be about $629,000,000.

"Ottawa seems bent on loading Canadians with debt—so much that every Canadian family will this year be required to pay approximately $148 in taxes for interest and servicing charges.

"I'm sure if every family was billed each year for this amount, the practice of piling up debt would quickly stop."

On municipalities, Mr. Wicks said in 1943-44 government assistance to local areas amounted to $3,500,000, but that in 1958-59 it "will amount to the astonishing sum of $63,000,000."

He said that the provincial Indian Advisory Committee has now adopted a policy of rotating its membership, which will mean that periodically new faces will be added to the committee.

"In this way new and perhaps broader points of view will be obtained to guide the government on matters pertinent to this committee," he said.

He said "the government of this province and the people are looking forward to the day when Indians, through increasing education, vocational training and other means, will be integrated into the life of the province in a much fuller degree than they are at present."

Industrial Relations Summit?

VANCOUVER (CP)—Archie H. Cater, 1959 president of the Vancouver Board of Trade, called yesterday for a top level conference of management and labor.

Addressing the board's annual meeting, Mr. Cater said there is "virtually no communication" between labor and management in a world where communication is reaching its peak.

He said he proposed to invite "a few senior leaders of the labor movement to meet with a few representatives of management."

This group would draw up an agenda which could then form the basis of a top level conference "to seriously and sincerely explore our long range destiny as a people in this most favored province."

He believed the conference would help management and labor determine in what areas they are alike in their views and in what areas they are opposed.

The conference should be able to discuss their views fairly, objectively and reasonably, he said.

Such a conference would "do much to bridge the gap between management and labor and thus ensure progress and prosperity for all in this our city of destiny."

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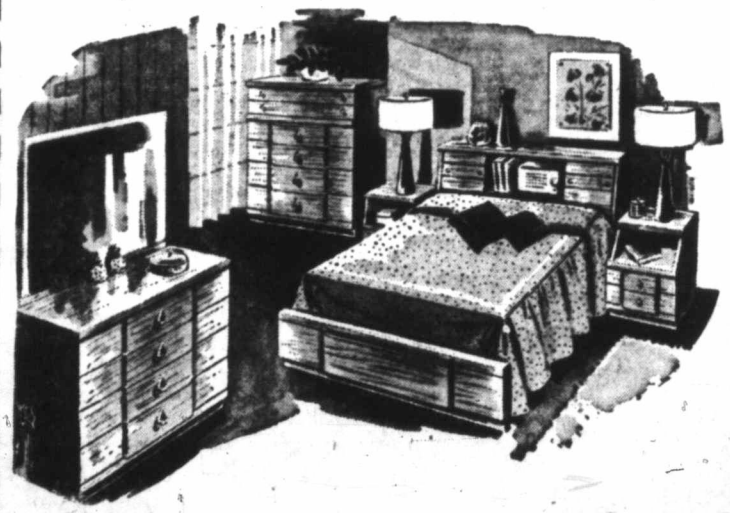

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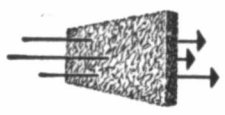

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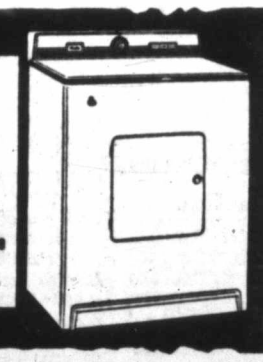

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